

CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: January – March 2005

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I. SUMMARY

The first quarter of 2005 was dominated by the February 27 parliamentary election, March 13 runoff election, and subsequent mass protests in Kyrgyz Republic's main cities in the south and the north in late March, the latter leading to President Akaev's exit from Kyrgyz Republic, the establishment of an interim government, and the scheduling of a pre-term presidential election in July.

The pre-campaign period was marked by a controversial vote of the lower house of parliament to amend the election law to allow former Kyrgyzstani diplomats who had been absent from the country five years or more to be eligible for candidate registration. President Akaev declined to sign the amendment into law, creating the first flashpoint issue of the campaign. During this time, IRI conducted candidate consultations, candidate public speaking training, and candidate election observer training.

The campaign period officially began February 2 with 427 candidates (68 of them incumbents) registered to run for 75 seats in the new unicameral parliament. The campaign period was replete with violations of political rights, including warnings of unrest, the deregistration of candidates, and blatant vote buying. In addition, the administration interfered with several media operations to distort candidate news coverage.

During the campaign period, IRI analyzed the election-related activity in Bishkek districts. The analysis showed that some political parties that were not fielding candidates, and nomination conventions were being used to stack the precinct election commissions (PECs). Few voters have heard of these "paper" parties, but they were still able to get their members appointed to the PECs. The most egregious examples were the Party of Farmer and Local Communities with (121 seats on the Bishkek PECs), Party of Construction Workers (123 seats), Party of New Forces-Women (134 seats), and Soglasie (129 seats). By comparison, higher profile parties such as Moya Strana had only 37 seats, Ar-Namys 11 seats, and Social Democratic Party five seats. Unfortunately, even candidates running on party slates often played down their party affiliation in order to avoid any negative associations the party may have received in the state-controlled media.

All of the contests IRI observed were dominated by local issues such as water supply, roads, and the local economy. IRI observed little debate on global issues, macroeconomic issues, border issues, taxes, crime, or national security. Although a national-level election was taking place, the electorate was looking for candidates wealthy enough to pay for or obtain government funds for local needs.

IRI fielded 12 election observers, eight of whom observed polls in districts in and around Bishkek, and four of whom observed in Chui oblast with the OSCE. IRI's observers concurred with the OSCE's determination that the February 27 first round fell short of international standards, but primarily in the pre-election day period. Like the OSCE, IRI observed that voting procedures at the polls and the vote count were reasonably orderly, but that supplemental voter lists were not properly handled and pre-election day interference with media, selective application of the law for charges of vote buying, and de-registration of candidates did not allow for fair competition nor voter confidence. The first round produced only 31 winners, with the remaining 44 contests to be determined in a second round or postponed first round (Kochkor and Ton district) of voting. Only 16% of first round candidates were party affiliated. Most candidates were self-nominated businessmen or former government managers. Nationwide voter turnout was estimated at 60 percent. *See attached IRI Election Report.*

Between the first and second round, the Central Election Commission (CEC) instructed IRI to cease candidate observer trainings on the alleged basis that they were "illegal." Notwithstanding this, IRI followed the advice of a CEC lawyer and informed the CEC of IRI's training dates, locations, and content, and proceeded to conduct the observer trainings in the regions as scheduled.

OSCE concluded that the March 13 runoff election showed little if any improvement over the first round: interference with the media, more arbitrary candidate de-registrations, and problems with voter lists largely remained. The CEC estimated voter turnout at 54.51 percent. Thirty-seven winners emerged in the second round, leaving seven races undecided before widespread protests and challenges. The runoff election was held in a climate of public protests against unfair elections in Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Naryn. The following weekend, protestors occupied municipal buildings in Osh and a district building in Jalal-Abad, demanded President Akaev's resignation, and launched a string of election-related protests that eventually led to Bishkek and forced the President to flee the country.

In this uncertain, and at times violent, environment, IRI monitored developments and kept U.S. officials informed and had contact with western media to give a direct account of what was taking place during the tense 12-day period after the runoff election.

As of the end of the first quarter, 63 of the 75 parliament seats were definitively decided, with the remainder subject to a court ruling, CEC decision, or a re-election. In addition, the focus shifted quickly from the parliamentary race and validity of the new parliament to President Akaev's official resignation and the early call for a presidential election.

II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Activity was implemented under a six-month work plan, scheduled to expire at the confluence of the parliamentary election and the end of the first quarter. The next work plan (April – June 2005) is designed around the pre-term presidential election. Technical assistance in the first quarter of 2005 focused on objectives C and D listed below.

- A. Build and strengthen party organization and operations.
- B. Help build coalitions among active political parties.
- C. Assist parties in preparing candidates for the February 2005 Supreme Kenesh elections, and for the October 2005 presidential election. This includes conducting a nationwide poll in advance of the presidential election.
- D. Train political party precinct election commission (PEC) members and "trusted agents" to make sure they are equipped with the information they need to carry out their responsibilities.

In the post-parliamentary and post-presidential election periods, IRI's objectives are to:

- E. Guide political parties on the legislative process and how to work with elected parliamentarians from their party or a coalition member party on important legislation and national policy.
- F. Provide parliamentary support in the form of constituent relations training.
- G. Help parties develop sustainable operations and strategies between and after elections.

Pre-election training

As part of its pre-campaign training plan for political parties continued from the previous quarter, IRI conducted consultations with candidates and campaign staff from three parties, candidate public speaking training for eight candidates and two staffers and one candidate consultant, and candidate election observer training for 613 observers in 11 cities. In preparation for the runoff election, IRI conducted additional candidate observer training in four cities, training 153 observers.

Yuri Isaev, director of the Center for Electoral Technologies, Perm, Russia, conducted the consultations and the public speaking training, the latter with the help of local TV journalist Alexander Kulinski.

Candidate consultations

The consultations were part of IRI's mandate to USAID to promote a more competitive political process (LLR 2.1.3.1), generally help strengthen democratic culture among citizens (SO 2.1) by encouraging candidates to view the electorate in an appropriate way, and encourage opportunities for citizen participation (IR 2.1.3) in the PECs.

Consultant Isaev and IRI Resident Country Director Jeff Lilley met with candidates and campaign managers from Kairan-El and Elet parties and the Social Democratic Party. The consultations followed up meetings held a month earlier with parties and candidates about parliamentary election plans. The meetings provided a chance to have more in-depth conversations with candidates about strategy and tactics. IRI found that the combination of single-mandate districts, fewer seats, and wealthy candidates made the recent elections the most competitive in the country's history. This was confirmed by the consultations, which on average lasted about two hours each. The candidates or their campaign managers appealed to IRI for international observers in the districts, for specific help in preparing strategy, and assistance in finding campaign consultants.

The consultations were with moderate opposition candidates. The most interesting insight came from consultations with the campaign manager of a sitting governor in one oblast who was running against the sitting governor from another oblast, in what was one of the highest profile (and expensive) races in one of Kyrgyz Republic's poorest regions. The local political logic in this case was a strategy of running two opposition candidates from one bloc or movement in one district against a pro-government candidate, which would force the pro-government candidate(s) to spread his/their administrative resources more thinly, thus giving an opposition candidate a better chance of making it to the second round. Though counterintuitive to our Western approach, it made sense in the local context. IRI also learned that, however much they might complain, "opposition" candidates also have access to certain administrative resources, usually through family members who occupy positions in local government. Vote buying was widespread, but some candidates hoped that the voters would take the money, but still vote their conscience.

Election platforms focused primarily on local issues or general platitudes. "We don't need complicated ideas in a platform," said one candidate. "Each village will have its own message." The prevalent idea was to get elected to parliament and then be in a position to direct budget money to one's district. Local issues – water, roads, electricity, forming sports teams – dominated. One candidate said his platform was freedom of speech, free and fair elections, and rule of law; but, he planned to adjust that platform accordingly for each village he visited.

IRI tried to focus the candidates on the need to research the electoral district, conduct opposition research on the opponent's record in areas like health and education, base the campaign on facts, and to use the institution of a PEC member with consultative vote. This last point was seized on by attendees from various regions, especially Naryn, where the influence and resources of the two contending candidates in a very close

contest pushed the campaign staff to develop a more sophisticated approach in staffing and strategy.

While the consultations were useful, the parties were disorganized in responding: either they forgot the appointment or something more pressing came up. Nevertheless, the consultation effort helped develop trust among a network of political party activists. Alga-Kyrgyzstan took the least advantage of the consultations: the party's candidates reportedly hired a team of Russian political consultants with ties to the Kremlin.

Candidate Public Speaking Training

The small-group training consisted of a three-and-a-half hour session of instruction, including a training DVD, and an exercise in which a real television journalist and candidate were filmed doing a mock interview and then two candidate participants engaged in a mock debate. The activities were followed by critiques of the candidates' performances in the exercises. Two group sessions were held each day for two days. The idea was not only to give tips and practice in speaking, interviewing, and debating, but to emphasize the importance of issue-oriented connections with the electorate. This training was designed to fulfill IRI's commitment to encourage a more competitive political process (LLR 2.1.3.1) and enhance opportunities for citizen participation in governance (election to the parliament) (IR 2.1.3).

The trainer was Yuri Isaev (referenced above), accompanied by local television journalist Alexander Kulinski. The training topics were:

- how to structure a campaign speech
- connecting with your audience
- writing a two-minute campaign speech
- interviewing skills
- practice interview on camera
- debate skills
- practice debate on camera

Participants included candidates:

- Ulan Oruzaliev (Kairan-el)
- Zhakshibek Asanov, Sergei Benisovich (Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan)
- Elkinbek Ashirbaev (Social Democratic Party)
- Ishenkul Boldzhurova (People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan)
- Klara Azhibekova (Communist Party)
- Oleg Zhuravlyov, Olga Bezborodova (Alga-Kyrgyzstan)
- Giaz Tokombaev (Republican Party)
- Sultan Mederov (New Course)

Campaign staff, consultants, others:

- Musurkul Kabelbekov (Elet)

- Vyacheslav Smirnov, political consultant for Alga
- Ruslan and Sabir, campaign staff for Oruzaliev
- Marat Sarulinov, advisor to President Akaev (observed the trainings)

The first trainer gave general background on effective campaign speech writing: speeches should be based on common values, cite a concrete issue, and offer a solution. The television journalist talked about appearing on TV: the entertainment quality of TV, appearance, speaking simply, and using humor or tragedy to make a connection with the audience. In the mock interview, he asked questions based on the candidates' two-minute speech, including difficult and unexpected questions, such as the candidate's stand on legalizing drugs or prostitution. The pre-selected debate topic was "polygamy." One person was chosen to argue "pro," the other to argue "con."

The candidates expressed their appreciation for this type of interactive training. Unfortunately, the candidates who did not keep their individual appointments missed this valuable training. In one unusual instance, the Alga-Kyrgyzstan candidates kept the appointment but were unwilling to do the exercise. The Alga campaign consultant, who was present at the appointment, said one of the candidates needed training doing mock interview and debate, but the candidate refused, even though he stayed the full three hours in conversation with IRI's Russian trainer.

The training gave the participants the experience of writing and speaking within a limited time frame, of going in front of a camera and then getting a chance to have their performance critiques. One participant, a former Minister of Education who is now a vice-premier in the interim government, remarked, "Even though I have appeared on TV a lot, I learned much about how I can present myself better on TV. The training focused on details that one should pay attention to and use to one's advantage."

A positive factor in the training was having a respected local television journalist who knew many of the participants and knew the rules that govern debating. It was interesting for IRI to see that local issues are often foremost in the candidates' mind: fixing roads, providing water and electricity. For those candidates with a background in education or finance, those issues predominated, but there were few candidates who seemed capable of handling a variety of issues.

Public speaking is one of the IRI's most popular election-related trainings. The exercises, the filming and the critique make a great impression on the participants. Presidential Advisor Sarulinov stayed for the entire training. His visit coincided with criticism toward IRI related to mass protests in Ukraine over the presidential election there. At the end of the training, Mr. Sarulinov rose from his seat and said out loud for all to hear: "I have very positive impressions of this training. We need to do more of this. The only negative is that there are so few people."

Candidate Observer Training – Round One

To further the strategic objective for strengthening democratic culture among citizens (SO 2.1), encouraging a more competitive political process (LLR 2.1.3.1), and generally contributing to an honest electoral process, IRI implemented an ambitious

training program for candidate poll watchers: 613 candidate observers were trained in 11 cities throughout the country.

The training took place in the 10 days prior to the beginning of the official campaign period and consisted of two major efforts: one in the north and one in the south. IRI staff who had developed an expertise in candidate observer rights and responsibilities as stipulated in the election code, conducted the training. The northern trip included Bishkek, Naryn, Kochkor, Karokol, Tokmok, and Talas. The southern trip included Isfana, Batken, Jalal-Abad, Uzgen, and Osh. In mid-February, IRI trained 80 observers for Elet party candidate Kasiev in the town of At-Bashi, and 70 observers for Social Democratic Party candidate Japarov in Kochkor. Of the 613 candidate observers trained, 493 were men and 120 were women.

Training topics at all locations included:

- responsibilities of four types of candidate representatives during the election: trusted agents, authorized representatives, observers, and members of election commissions with advisory vote;
- explanation of new changes to the election code regarding these positions, including a discussion of “what is campaigning”;
- demonstration of invisible ink and discussion of its use; and
- specific group exercises and presentations on voter lists, vote counting, polling station operations, mobile voting, observer rights and obligations.

Participants included individual, party-affiliated, and NGO-affiliated volunteers for candidates. Four OSCE long-term observers and USAID staff also attended several of the training sessions.

The goal of the training was to instruct candidate observers on their rights and responsibilities according to the election code. The training also clarified issues like absentee balloting, mobile voting, and the selection of polling station officials. The competitive nature of many races encouraged more people to get involved as a candidate representative at the polls. Many volunteers had no poll watching experience. Another goal was to help the parties develop a cadre of experienced election workers who can train others. The training format was a three-and-a-half hour educational seminar with practical exercises to demonstrate various election day scenarios.

IRI trainers stressed that the new election code provides extensive rights to observers and members of the election commission with advisory vote, the latter a position very similar to a polling station worker but without the right to work on election day or to vote on issues of concern to the polling station. The trainers emphasized that the law should be learned and followed and that complaints should go through the courts.

IRI distributed a pamphlet with excerpts of relevant election code articles on the rights and responsibilities of the four types of candidate representatives as well as copies of the voting protocol. IRI also disseminated IFES’ PEC manuals, which contained all pertinent information on observers and PEC members with advisory vote. Participants also received copies of the election code in Russian and Kyrgyz. Drawing on previous

cooperative trainings with the CEC, IRI trainers gave hints on best practices for observers, such as saving time by having and filling out a copy of the voting protocol instead of waiting to be given one by the PEC.

A popular part of the training was the demonstration of the invisible ink to mark voters who had cast a ballot. The training was modeled on IFES' training module used during the local elections for polling station workers. Participants worked in groups with an expert group composed of people who had prior experience.

IRI local staff who conducted the training were well received in both the north and south, on the basis of a sound knowledge of the election code, bilingual facility, and engaging the participants in interactive exercises. Through the training, IRI gained some insights into PECs in the southern cities. According to one experienced participant in Jalal-Abad, the PECs are corrupt not because they take money, but because the Soviet-era mentality of wanting to satisfy political leadership persists: the PECs do whatever they can – such as ruin or mark ballots – in order to provide the result the authorities want, even when it is not specifically requested.

IRI overcame initial resistance from the CEC to conduct the training. Although IRI had provided the CEC with training information, the CEC was slow in processing this information and wanted IRI to suspend its training schedule. IRI used connections both inside and outside the Kyrgyz Government to overcome the CEC's order. In the end, a CEC review commission found no problems with IRI's candidate observer training.

Candidate Observer Training – Round Two

At USAID's request, IRI staff replicated the same training for the runoff election scheduled two weeks later. The runoff election was also a large effort, with 44 of the 75 seats undecided. In the week preceding the runoff election, IRI held eight candidate observer training sessions in four cities (Jalal-Abad, Osh, Bishkek, and Karakol) training another 153 observers (over 100 of them women).

Other activity

During the quarter, IRI's resident country director and local staff attended several election coordination meetings with the OSCE, UNDP, Ambassador Young, embassy and USAID staff, and other international and local democracy assistance organizations. IRI staff also continued to meet with political party leaders and political movement/bloc activists to keep each other mutually informed of developments and plans. Election-related meetings and events which IRI attended include:

- Melis Zhunushaliev, deputy secretary, Alga-Kyrgyzstan
- campaign advisor to Osh governor Nakien Kasiev, candidate for parliament
- Party of Progress candidate, Uzgen district
- Kairan-El candidate and campaign manager
- Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) nominating convention (*see Results and Indicators section below*)

- Alga-Kyrgyzstan nominating convention (*see Results and Indicators section below*)
- Adilet nominating convention (*see Results and Indicators section below*)
- campaign manager for candidate Almaz Atambaev, Social Democratic Party
- Balbek Tulobaev, presidential administration and former head of Kyrgyzstan Kelechehi party (meetings pre- and post-election day)
- Bolot Maripov, candidate and main opponent of candidate Bermet Akaeva
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs roundtables for international NGOs involved in election assistance
- meet the candidate session for voters, candidate Bermet Akaeva
- meet the candidate session for voters, Bishkek district 7
- delegates with a Chinese election observation mission
- Kazakhstan political consultant to candidate Kasiev (Elet party)
- Emil Aliev, Ar-Namys (meeting shortly after the mass demonstrations began)
- Almaz Atambaev, Social Democratic Party (meeting after the mass demonstrations period ended)
- Bektur Asanov, Erkin party (among the leaders of the Jalal-Abad protests)
- Galina Kulikova, Moya Strana party coordinator (meeting after mass demonstrations had subsided)
- U.S. implementers Democracy Commission meeting (election assistance coordination)
- Overseas Advisory Security Council meeting (U.S. organizations and companies)

IRI's observation of the OSCE-UNDP-CEC joint conference on the parliamentary election deserves special comment. The OSCE and UNDP outlined their respective plans for helping the CEC administer a better election process. CEC Chairman Imanbaev stressed that the inking, more democratic formation of PECs, more expansive observer rights, and the posting of election results on the Internet the day after the elections were all reforms that would provide for freer and fairer elections. IRI noted the active role of political parties' representatives at the conference; most of them were generally positive about chances for an orderly election day. Moya Strana coordinator Galina Kulikova specifically thanked IRI, NDI, and the CEC for helping to train party activists and candidates. Nevertheless, the situation for the parties was not good: they had little financing, no party list, and few rights. Highlights of the conference were:

1. A controversial order shutting down local independent TV stations for the period of the campaign was rescinded at the conference by the head of State TV. The stations had reportedly not signed a contract about their use of the state-governed broadcast network. He was apparently prompted to do this after he was criticized by a prominent journalist, who sits on the CEC's working commission for monitoring the campaign.
2. There was heated discussion about voter lists, and the UNDP new election specialist said international standards require the voter list be posted in the polling stations for scrutiny to make sure they are as complete as possible. Despite repeated criticism, CEC Chairman Imanbaev contended that posting the voter list violates citizens' privacy rights. An election lawyer, Shamaral Machiev pointed

- out several inconsistencies in the election code, including the articles dealing with the voter list.
3. Political parties were more active in nominating candidates: 75 party affiliated candidates ran in the 2005 election, compared to 54 in the 2000 elections. However, 20 electoral districts had no party-affiliated candidates running, and in 34 districts only one political party representative was running.
 4. Bishkek had the most political party candidates (17). Women made up about 9% of candidates, and 80% of candidates were Kyrgyz.

IRI also made a special trip to At-bashi, Naryn Oblast, to observe the campaign between two former governors, Askar Salimbekov (Alga-Kyrgyzstan) and Naken Kasiev (Elet party), who are running against each other for parliament in the At-bashi electoral district. IRI trained campaign staff from both sides and visited both camps. IRI was pleased to find that the campaigns featured the parties as well as the candidates. IRI visited Kasiev's campaign headquarters. The staff seemed dedicated and aggressive, and implemented much of what they had learned at the IRI campaign staff training: they know the relevant parts of the election law and instructed their candidate's observers and other party activists on how to report problems at the polling stations, particularly with voter lists. The competition between the two high-powered candidates pushed the campaigning, at least on Kasiev's side, to a more sophisticated level. Kasiev's campaign used IRI's door-to-door campaigning DVD to instruct volunteers, IRI's public speaking DVD, and IRI handouts from the campaign training. In one territorial HQ, the Kasiev campaign used the campaign organizational structure learned at the IRI training, with some modifications to fit the local context.

Candidate Salimbekov's team appeared to run a more "conventional" campaign, using administrative resources and running the campaign through hospitals and schools. IRI talked to the territorial campaign manager who said the campaign was breaking no laws, but IRI heard from villagers and the opponent's supporters that Salimbekov's campaign gave gifts and money for votes.

The campaign pitted money (Salimbekov) against plain campaigning, strategizing, and clan ties (Kasiev). Candidate Salimbekov said openly that tribal ties are the foremost indicator of voter choice. His clan is smaller than Kasiev's clan. Salimbekov also talked openly about how his Party of Regions was forced to join Alga. "I subordinated myself," he said.

III. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Result 1: Improved organizational capacity of pro-democracy political parties.

Indicators:

A. Political parties chart out and begin to implement basic principles of party organization and operations. This will be measured in form of a written party plan and actual designation of volunteers to fulfill functions in the party organization. [Note: IRI will make its best effort to try to overcome the combination of conditions that make accomplishing this result difficult: clan-oriented thinking, single mandate elections, personality-driven parties.]

Quarterly Performance for Indicator A: *Not applicable this quarter.*

B. Political parties show sufficient capacity to responsibly nominate and support candidates for elected office. This will be measured during IRI observation of party nominating congresses and campaign observation.

Quarterly Performance for Indicator B: IRI held limited party strengthening training in the previous two quarters, and the training did not include the party nomination process. Thus, IRI's observations noted under this indicator are not the direct result of IRI training. Nevertheless, the conventions offer some measure of party development which IRI thinks is relevant.

Only three of 40 registered parties held genuine nominating conventions – Adilet, Alga, and SDPK. IRI attended all three conventions to gauge this indicator. Ar-Namys reportedly held a closed nominating convention in a secret location, which IRI was not able to observe. SDPK and Alga conventions showed genuine party functioning in terms of their high degree of organization and use of resources to support party-affiliated candidates. Adilet's convention had the appearance of an official government event.

The turnout for SDPK's convention was about 100 delegates from the northern electoral districts, and no delegates from the southern region. Convention steering committees ran the event. The party held one of the most organized nominating conventions, at which it nominated eight candidates to run for parliament in the northern districts. SDPK leader Almaz Atambaev rejuvenated his political image by being actively involved in the convention and in the campaign material of candidate Melis Eshimkanov. (Eshimkanov's party, Party of the Poor, merged with SDPK in advance of parliamentary election.) Indicators of party support for candidates were: 1) several candidates (Eshimkanov, Japarov (Kochkor) and others) ran on SDPK's ticket, although they were not registered party members; 2) these same candidates also used SDPK to nominate members to PECs; 3) during the campaign period, Atambaev appeared with two candidates at their respective "meet the candidate" meetings.

Alga's convention had over 700 delegates from across the country, a film of the party's achievements in 2004, and a nomination list of 26 candidates. The party distributed pamphlets that stated Alga's position on more than 50 issues, ranging from land reform to mortgage lending to the fight against extremism. (The pamphlet conveyed the idea that Kyrgyz Republic has developed to the point where it should stop cooperating with multinational organizations and do more to assert its independence. IRI's Russian trainer Yuri Isaev was of the opinion that Alga's team of Russian advisors essentially wrote Alga's pamphlet.) In essence, the pamphlet and the convention presented Alga as the "pro-position" party, rather than the "anti" party. The convention demonstrated that Alga was the most developed and active party in the country. The party's firm support for President Akaev was its main liability.

Alga was the best financed and organized of the parties, but this was due mostly to its ties with parties and consultants from Russia. While Alga attended some IRI trainings, they

relied mostly on paid Russian consultants to direct strategies for the individual campaigns and the use of state administrative resources.

Adilet's nominating convention featured a hard-hitting speech charging the opposition with stirring up the population and a pitch for President Akaev to stay in power. Party leaders announced that it would run 27 candidates in the parliamentary election. The youth wing spoke about organizing election-related activities at university campuses. IRI's impression was that Adilet's efforts were closely tied to the Akaev administration and not authentically competitive. The message was "if you do not vote for the Adilet government party, you are not fulfilling your government job responsibilities."

C. Parties develop a system for designating and training party members to serve as observers, trusted agents at polling stations, and PEC members. This will be measured at IRI training sessions for volunteers filling these roles and in follow-up contact.

Quarterly Performance for Indicator C: IRI was not able to track the system – if any – the parties employed for selecting volunteers to train for and serve as observers, trusted agents at polling stations, and PEC members. However, IRI noted that there was an abundance of such volunteers, a large number of whom attended IRI candidate observer and PEC member with advisory vote trainings. The seminar included instruction on how to replicate the training within the party.

IRI trainers Peter Sondergaard and Kanat Joldoshev visited seven regional cities where they trained over 600 candidate observers and PEC members with advisory vote, using the train-the-trainer model. IRI prepared pamphlets with the most relevant quotations (articles) from the Election Code (in Russian and Kyrgyz) and also disseminated IFES' manuals for PEC members, which contained information for observers and PEC members with advisory vote.

In follow up interviews, party campaign managers and party leaders said that IRI's candidate observer training was the only opportunity their volunteers had for learning their legal rights and responsibilities as observers. In several polling stations, the candidate observer preparation played a significant role in formally protesting violations.

For example, in case of Bolot Maripov, a candidate in Bishkek's university district who ran against Bermet Akaeva, his IRI-trained observers closely monitored the district's polling stations and filed a formal complaint about suspected violations. Mr. Maripov said that even if he eventually loses the contest (which is under review by the CEC), he and his staff were satisfied with the work they did and were confident they knew the law. Asel Shaboto, Maripov's representative, said that they appreciated IRI's efforts, especially in light of the fact that "this election was the dirtiest. Thank you for trying to improve the democratic environment in any possible way."

Sultan Soronkulov, campaign manager for Taktaim Umetalieva (candidate in a Bishkek district), brought his whole team (20 people) for IRI candidate observer training. Afterwards, he requested additional training materials to conduct further training. Similarly, well-trained candidate observers for Melis Eshimkanov performed

exceptionally well, and due to their efforts in recording suspected violations, they were able to finally secure the deputy seat for their candidate.

Result 2. Increased campaigning skills of political parties, through a more competitive political process.

Indicators: This will be measured by IRI keeping a record of applied campaign methods of the individual campaigns, including:

- Establishment of a campaign office
- Use of campaign staff and volunteers
- Campaign methods, such as door-to-door contact, literature drops
- Candidate appearances and events

Quarterly Performance for this indicator: IRI's follow-up interviews with candidates and campaign managers revealed that about 50% of respondents were positive about the applicability and utility of IRI campaign training, and the other 50% were negative. At least 10 campaigns employed the training to good effect and would have been utterly lost without it, while others had difficulty applying the knowledge and techniques learned at the trainings. The latter group explained that this was partly due to the election campaign being extremely dirty and dishonest: playing by the rules was often a disadvantage relative to the advantages of vote buying and use of administrative resources. Furthermore, some respondents thought that Kyrgyz culture and mentality made traditional campaign technologies less applicable to Kyrgyz Republic. Some campaigns outside Bishkek found it difficult to apply the campaign methods that were better suited to urban environments.

IRI notes that some of the more critical feedback may be due to the fact that campaigning is still new in Kyrgyz Republic; campaigners need to get used to these methods and see them work before they will accept that they are relevant and useful to their work. About half of the respondents reported a positive experience with the techniques and others are now familiar with techniques that can be used to conduct clean and effective election campaigns in the future.

Sultan Soronkulov, campaign manager for Taktaim Umetalieva (candidate in a Bishkek district), gave a positive example of the training. He said, "We used everything [learned in IRI's party activist training]. Since we attended the training, we tried to implement it. For instance, how the shtab (campaign core group) should be organized and operate. This gave us good organizational results. Also, we tried to follow the pattern for agitators to have man and woman in a team and every four agitators had a foreman as Isaev taught. We did not win, but we played honestly, we followed 'the theory', and didn't break principles. Our opponent did not do much agitation, but he won because he is a well-known coal king and showered coal and money everywhere. This was a hard lesson learned – we were prepared for the campaign, but were helpless in the face of administrative resources."

On the negative side, Djorobaev Ravshan (university professor), campaign manager for Adilet candidate Bektemir Murzubraimov (university rector) in a southern city, said that

Russian trainer “Ignatiev taught things acceptable and reasonable for Russia, not for Kyrgyzstan. The door-to-door technique did not work for us. The organization of shtab [campaign office] also was different. We did everything in our own way. To be specific, I would say that the University was the shtab. Orders were given from above, and this is the way it worked. I didn’t receive my own monthly [salary] payment; I just signed a receipt and the money went directly to campaign support. The administrative machine worked very nicely.” His candidate won, but not by applying fair campaign methods.

Establishment of a campaign office. Based on post-election interviews, IRI learned that all participants managed to establish campaign offices. IRI visited six of them.

The set up and organization of the offices varied, depending on the financial resources of the candidates. All Alga candidates’ campaign offices that IRI visited were well-equipped and well-organized. For example, candidate Olga Bezborodova had her campaign office in the most populated area of her district, with 70 full-time volunteers.

Other candidates had their campaign operations based in their apartments. Ar Namys candidate Emil Aliev’s campaign operation was located in the party’s office, with only 10 volunteers. Candidate Melis Eshimkanov’s campaign was based in the editorial office of his newspaper “Agym.”

In Naryn and Kochkor, IRI visited two campaign offices. In Naryn, candidate Naken Kasiev’s office was located in two different buildings, which were well-equipped and had 20 staff. In Kochkor village, candidate Akil Japarov had a large office with 20 volunteers. Both offices were well organized. The campaign office of an independent candidate in Kochkor was just one man, a table, and a telephone.

Kurmanbek Bakiev’s campaign was located in the National Democratic Movement’s space. It was decently equipped and had full time staff.

Almost all of the independent candidates had their friends, supporters, and family members working for them. Others, such as candidates-bankers Murat Mukashev and Sharipa Sadybakasova, had their employees work for the campaign.

Use of campaign staff and volunteers. All candidates that IRI observed had 10 or more volunteer and paid campaign staff. Alga campaigns had 80-100 people per campaign working full time. Some independent candidates, depending on their financial resources, had up to 40 campaign staff, but the average staff was closer to 25. For example, independent candidate Oksana Malevanaya had only 10 staff, mostly journalists and students working for her. She said she could not afford additional help. IRI observed that some candidates had their own employees and government workers (teachers, etc.) on their campaign staff.

One of the most distinguishing features of these elections was the high level of involvement of people in the campaigning. A large segment of the electorate was involved to some degree in campaigning for a candidate. Even school children brought home campaign literature distributed by their teachers.

Candidate Melis Eshimkanov, chief-editor of the most popular Kyrgyz language newspaper, hired mostly younger staff because he found them more cost-effective in terms of the energy they put into the campaign. Another candidate-journalist, Bolot Maripov, had strong team working for him, mostly lawyers and newspaper staffers.

IRI's trainings for candidate observers and activists helped involve more volunteers and activists in the campaigns. The trainings were in themselves an encouragement for people to take part in the election campaign. Based on the trainings and the IRI material prepared for the trainings, some participants conducted additional trainings to recruit more people and raise the level of knowledge of those who were already recruited.

Most of the candidates had volunteers as observers during election day. Moya Strana, Alga, and Adilet managed to have observers present at a majority of polling stations where IRI observed.

However, the issue of campaign staff and volunteers is impossible to separate from the widespread misuse of administrative resources. For example one IRI participant, a teacher at a university in a southern city, related to IRI that he was essentially forced to work for his rector's campaign. IRI encountered many instances of campaign workers being subtly coerced into action by their superiors.

Campaign methods. Candidates used various campaign methods. Naken Kasiev's campaign was an example of traditional campaigning: his team widely used mobile groups of agitators and the door-to-door (DTD) method. Using IRI's DTD training, his volunteers managed to visit every household two-three times. His campaign also conducted multiple trainings for campaign activists using IRI training material and DTD CD ROM.

IRI observed that candidate Akil Japarov's campaign in Kochkor, a relatively small town, put up four campaign billboards. Alga candidates – few of whom took advantage of IRI training – used the method of individual meetings with the voters, as opposed to appearances with their opponents. This was not a popular method: the public criticized the party for being aloof. Candidate Sultan Mederov used advice from the IRI training and did DTD campaigning himself. He said that he wanted all the people of his district to get to know him personally. Communist party candidate Klara Ajibekova stood at an intersection and distributed her campaign literature. Giyaz Tokombaev also distributed pamphlets himself, because he did not have enough staff to help. Ar Namys candidate Emil Aliev also personally campaigned DTD in his district. One of the well known regional candidates, Kadyrbekov, gave out his business card in place of campaign literature. Melis Eshimkanov used red as his campaign color. His young agitators wore red coats with the candidate's name on it and distributed red-colored leaflets.

Candidate appearances and events. All of the candidates highly valued the "candidate image" segment of the trainings. One candidate's campaign manager said that his candidate's main strength was the image he cultivated using advice from IRI's training.

There were two types of candidate meetings with the voters: "meet the candidates" meetings with multiple candidates organized by the territorial election commissions

(TEC), and self-organized, individual meetings. The election code prescribes that TECs can organize candidates meetings with voters. Therefore, these meetings were more typical than self-organized meetings. TEC members acted as moderators at these meetings. IRI staff observed 30 such meetings in and around Bishkek. Candidates widely used the method of putting their own people in the audience. At almost at all these meetings, IRI encountered the same people in the audience asking the same type of provocative questions to irritate the opposing candidates.

“Meet the candidate” events generally attracted large numbers of the public and were spirited. Alga candidates most often declined to appear at these events. IRI saw opposition candidates at candidate meetings it observed. This competition increased voter interest in the election and fostered more lively debate between the candidates. Each event had a particular set of issues and personalities. For example, at one candidate meeting in a district outside Bishkek, the debate turned on the unfair application of anti-trust laws against a local sugar producer.

It was interesting to see how the candidates fought for themselves and continued to keep coming to the meetings. Communist candidate Klara Ajibekova, for example, was very professional at using skills learned from IRI’s public speaking training. Melis Eshimkanov was the most creative candidate: he often used entertainers (singers, dancers, and other famous performers). He spoke 10 minutes and then let the entertainers perform for 20 minutes. This always attracted the attention of about 300-500 people in the vicinity. His final event was a concert that could accommodate 3,000 people, just two days before election day.

Result 3: Political party contact with members of the Supreme Kenesh, NGOs and other parties seeking to influence national legislation.

Indicator: Political parties are literate on the legislative process and take the initiative to engage this process in lobbying for legislation reflecting their respective platforms, as well as building coalitions with NGOs and other parties in pursuit of legislative goals.

Not applicable this quarter.

Result 4: Political party and independent members of the Supreme Kenesh practice constituent relations.

Indicators:

- A. SK members open constituent offices in their electoral districts.
- B. SK members travel more frequently and appear at events in their electoral districts.
- C. SK members establish alternative methods of contact and follow-up with their constituents.

Not applicable this quarter.

IRI Kyrgyzstan Election Report Parliamentary Elections February 27, 2005 and March 13, 2005

Summary of First round

Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyz Republic in 2005 took place under new legislation which heralded positive changes to the election code. Chief among them were party and NGO representation on the election commissions, transparent ballots boxes, smaller and more open voting booths, more robust observer rights, and the introduction of inking to prevent double voting. The elections also marked the single mandate districts. The party list, which filled 25% of seats in the upper chamber of the last parliament, was abolished.

These changes, plus competitive races, helped assure the best election day voting in Kyrgyzstan's 15-year history as an independent nation. Precinct election commissions (PECs) were well trained and performed well in difficult and tense conditions. The Central Election Commission (CEC) did a good job of preparing the commissions. Violations shifted from the procedural dimension to the pre-Election Day campaign period.

At the same time, the Kyrgyz people rallied behind their candidates in unprecedented fashion. In two districts, at the urging of candidates disqualified on spurious grounds, voters cast overwhelming votes "against all" candidates. In other districts, voters protested what they saw as unfair election procedures. This politicization may mean that the Kyrgyz people are beginning to understand they do have a say in their future. Overall, turnout for the first round, in which 31 races were decided, was 60%, while during the second round, when another 38 races were decided, 59% of voters cast their ballots. In another six races, there will be run-offs held in the next week.

Political parties played a small role in the elections. The main role was staffing election commissions and putting up observers. About 15% of candidates were nominated by political parties, but not one candidate nominated by an opposition party won a seat. Pro-government parties took 27 seats.

Activities before Election Day

Activities before Election Day included serious violations that influenced the results of the elections. Among these were more than 10 candidate deregistrations by courts and PECs, some on very spurious grounds. The role of courts in the election process remains very problematic and undermines voter confidence. This may be one of the main reasons for continuing demonstrations throughout the country. **In addition, unbalanced access to mass media continues to hamstring elections in Kyrgyzstan. In the lead-up to the Feb. 27 elections, it was very difficult for the opposition, outside of official air time granted to all candidates by the CEC, to get on TV. A related problems was that just a few days before the vote, electricity to the US-funded printing press was cut off for bureaucratic reasons, and Radio Liberty's affiliate, Radio Azzatyk, lost its frequency to broadcast to the regions. Opposition newspapers were hassled, their issues bought up or confiscated.** Other problems included:

Voter lists

Outdated voter lists continued to be a problem. They were littered with dead souls and absent voters. On Election Day many people could not find their names on lists even though they had voted just three months ago in local kenesh elections. This caused up to 10% of voters names to be added to supplemental voter lists. The supplemental lists provided ample opportunity for manipulation.

Election commissions and observers

Even though there were some improvements in formation of election commissions, the process is still far from democratic. Representation of political parties is small, while the other two resources for filling up the PECs -- NGOs and voters' assembly -- are easily manipulated by the government. Also, there are parties (Soglasie, Party of Construction Workers, Party of Farmers) that did not run candidates for parliament but were just vehicles for pro-government parties and candidates to "stack" PECs. Thus, by using such administrative resources, some candidates strongly influenced the work of PECs and higher level election commissions.

Violations

The violations that most influenced the results were massive use of administration resources to help pro-government candidates campaign (providing meeting places to some and refusing it to others) as well as to exert strong pressure on students and state workers (teachers, doctors, etc.) to vote for a particular candidate. State workers were warned that they would lose their jobs if they would vote for other than pro-government candidates. In the University District students were forced to get registered at the university and vote for Bermet Akaeva.

Vote buying was also widespread and practiced by all sides of the political spectrum. Different people from all over the country reported that candidates were giving out presents (vodka, sugar, tea, etc) and money. And that continued on Election Day. Candidate observers, as well as independent observers reported busing of voters to PECs and vote buying just outside of polling stations. Vote buying reached epidemic proportions and perverted the meaning of elections. Voting sometimes approximates a commercial transaction **where** voters are more interested in the fast buck rather than what the candidate proposes to do.

In many districts IRI observed strong interference in election process from officials of all levels, starting from "domkoms" and "kvartalny" (holdover residential managers and know-it-alls from the Soviet times) up to akims and deputies of local keneshes. They played an important role in pre-election day activities and on Election Day.

Another negative of the pre-election period was use of state-influenced mass-media to discredit opposition leaders. Just before Election Day, the national channel showed TV programs that strongly criticized opposition leaders.

Election Day

To observe the parliamentary elections in Bishkek, IRI Kyrgyzstan set up four teams of two people.

1. **Donna Stewart and Yuri Isaev, IRI Kazakhstan -- Togolok-Moldosky district.**
2. **Kanat Joldoshev and Kuban Chorojev, IRI Kyrgyzstan – University District.**
3. **Two Japanese diplomats – Asanbaevsky District.**
4. **Cholpon Omuralieva and Masha Ponamaryova, IRI Kyrgyzstan -- Yunusalievsky District.**

Two other IRI teams were designated to the OSCE short-term observation mission in Chui Oblast west of Bishkek.

It is important to note that the CEC did a good job in organizing the work of lower election commissions for Election Day. We observed that PEC members were better educated, and that they conducted the election administration in a responsible way. Because of their work and the latest changes to the election code, it was almost impossible to manipulate voting and vote counting on Election Day at the polling stations.

The other positive fact to mention is that candidates' representatives and other observers were well organized. Particularly noteworthy was the widespread use of the role of the candidate representative called the "member of the PEC with advisory vote." These PEC members with advisory vote played a very important role in monitoring voting at the polling stations. **The team of candidate Bolat Maripov, who ran in a field which included President Akaev's daughter,** even got a letter from CEC which further explained their rights. They used this letter to demand their rights be respected by PEC members. IRI placed special emphasis on PEC members with advisory vote in its observer trainings, and distributed the above letter at its observer trainings for the second round. But there were problems as well.

In Yunusalievsky District, at the entrance to every PEC, officials were standing and instructing people to vote for Alga candidate Juravlyov, a clear violation of the election code. Officials occasionally visited polling stations and gave PEC chairmen instructions. The same situation was observed in two other districts where candidates from "Alga, Kyrgyzstan" were running.

In Togolok-Moldosky District, the two main candidates were "Alga, Kyrgyzstan's" Begaliev and the owner of a bank, Mukashev. The main problems at the polling stations were that PEC members were not organized, and there were long lines of voters, most likely due to the inking, which caused many complaints and created tension between observers and voters.

In Asanbaevsky District, our observers saw many unauthorized people milling around the polling station. Some of them were drunk, an indicator that voters were being offered vodka for their votes. Other observers said there was vote buying going on outside the polling stations. At most polling stations, the chairmen did not let observers see the whole process and did not react to their complaints.

In University District, we could see that state workers were involved in the election process. At polling stations where students were registered there were very long lines. Students complained that they were forced to show up and vote for Bermet Akaeva. When we checked their documents it appeared that they had been registered just before election process started. Outside of these polling stations university professors were seen coordinating student movements.

In all four districts supplemental voter lists were widely used. **They also played a role in the election district outside Bishkek where IRI Director Jeff Lilley observed for the OSCE. There, the Ministry of Interior played a significant role in organizing the vote in at least one polling station, where at least 80 people voted on the additional list using a permission slip granted by the local Ministry of Interior department. This was not a legal document, yet these people were allowed to vote. The candidate who ended up winning was the brother of the Minister of Interior.**

Second round

Run-offs were held at a time of public protests in different regions. These protests arose in reaction to candidate de-registrations and public perception of unfair elections. IRI sent two teams to cover districts in Bishkek, and one team was seconded to the OSCE.

1. **Cholpon Omuralieva, IRI Kyrgyzstan, and a Japanese diplomat, -- Asanbaevsky District.**
 2. **Kanat Joldoshev and Kuban Choroey, IRI Kyrgyzstan – University District.**
- One IRI team was deployed to Jalalabad Oblast in the south to observe for the OSCE.**

In Bishkek, we observed that students are starting to make independent decisions on who to vote for. This was especially evident in the University District, where tallies showed that both candidates got almost the same number of votes at student-dominated polling stations, while during the first round pro-government candidate Akaeva beat her opponent Maripov by nearly a thousand votes at these two polling stations. Akaeva ended up winning because of her campaign's ability to get a higher voter turnout. Many of those voters were likely pressured to vote. The second-round process was sullied by ugly use of administrative resources, reports of busing in voters, and intimidation. IRI was present at a press conference held by candidate Maripov's campaign chairman. He showed video of thugs harassing campaign staff with a pistol. The video caught the thug pulling a pistol out of his pocket. **Biased reporting continued to characterize the second round as well. IRI saw a documentary on an independent channel known to belong to the President's son-in-law. It was a crude production and depicted opposition leaders as disloyal traitors, who wanted to bring civil war and chaos to Kyrgyzstan.**

Election commissions and observers

During the second round, PECs were better organized and confident in their work. Some PEC members rearranged the order of polling stations to make them more convenient for observers and PEC members. PEC members with advisory vote met little resistance from fellow PEC members. They could stand anywhere they wanted to. But, IRI did get a few telephone calls from Maripov's people complaining that PEC members did not let some of the candidate observers in the polling station.

Both Bishkek teams reported that observers did a good job at the polling stations. Candidates used all possibilities to nominate observers, and as a result, in every PEC there were many observers from different organizations. On the other hand, IRI noticed there were observers who had been forced to come there and were at the polling stations just to sign complaints against the opposition candidate.

Violations

The same violations from the first round were repeated during the run-offs. There was huge use of administration resources to instruct and pressure voters. Vote buying was used more intensively. IRI observers were also told that allies of pro-government candidates were transporting people from other districts to vote for them.

According to candidate Eshimkanov's complaints, his people recorded instances of at least 90 voters who were registered in other districts voting in Asanbaevsky district. We heard the same complaints from Maripov about the University District. He said that one doctor came to his office and warned him that officials were busing state workers to the University District and forcing them to vote for Akaeva.

Election Day

In Asanbaevsky District, the election process at the polling station was organized and peaceful. There was no tension between PEC members and candidate representatives. But observers reported that violations were taking place outside the polling stations. Both candidates were buying votes and busing people to the polling stations. The difference between the results of two candidates was just 61 votes, and opposition candidate Eshimkanov has filed with the court to rule on violations by pro-government candidate Sadybakasova.

In the University District, PEC members worked very well. They were polite and tolerant of all observers. The tension was between the different candidates' observers. Akaeva's team used administration resources to nominate many observers in every district. These observers wrote complaints almost every half hour in attempts to stop activity of Maripov's observers.

Conclusion

Thus, IRI observed elections in nine districts during the first and second rounds, including OSCE observation. Conclusions are as follows:

- **Pre-election day violations – in the form of interference of government organs, pressure on the independent press, and biased reporting – created an unhealthy environment for Election Day voting. Vote-buying has become a matter of fact.**
- **Procedures on the day of elections, including voting, vote counting and observing, were much improved, perhaps due to experience, but also to country-wide training conducted by IFES in conjunction with the CEC. IRI would like to note that it financed and organized a pilot project with IFES and the CEC for this precise training during last fall's local elections.**
- **Elections were competitive and offered voters a choice between candidates. Unfortunately, the courts and/or election commissions interfered and removed at least 12 candidates from races in the first and second rounds. It was these decisions, made arbitrarily in many cases, that angered voters and pushed them to block roads and seize buildings.**
- **Voter lists of all kinds presented serious problems and provided opportunities for manipulation.**
- **The final result shows a big win for pro-government or independent candidates. The opposition has won just a handful and has been crying foul play since the first round.**